from the Darkot Pass to the Shandur village, a distance of 103 miles from south east to north north west with its small surrounding valleys of Kamri, Tarkhan, Parkhing, Sor, Khuramuh and Bagrot; and along the Gilgit river from Gilgit to Gasuh, with its adjacent valley of Yasin, a distance of 64 miles.

The country was first conquered in 1846 by the troops of His Highness the Maharaja of Kashmir under Syad Yakub Shah from Gauhar Aman, the Khushwakt Chief of Yasin, who had usurped the district from Sikandar Khan and his brother Karim Khan, the rightful rulers of Gilgit. Karim Khan had escaped to Kashmir to ask for help, and returned with a large force under Syad Yakub Shah. Hearing the news of their approach, Gauhar Aman fled to Yasin, leaving the country to be possessed by them without bloodshed. The country was restored to the rightful rulers, but some two years later the Maharaja of Kashmir to keep the district under the direct jurisdiction of his own officials. The British Agency was established in 1889. The Political Agent, an officer of the Government of India, and the Wazir-i-Wazarat, an official of His Highness the Maharaja of Kashmir, have their headquarters at Gilgit proper. The latter has jurisdiction over the district only, while the former, in addition to his control over Gilgit, has political relations with the surrounding states of Hunza, Nagir, Punial, Ishkoman, Yasin, Ghizr and the Chilas republic, which all acknowledge the supremacy of the Kashmir Durbar. Gilgit is garrisoned by Kashmir Imperial Service Troops under a General Officer Commanding appointed by His Highness the Maharaja of Kashmir. The troops are relieved every two years.

A good cart road runs between Srinagar, Gilgit, Chitral and Hunza, remaining open to traffic from June to October. It is closed from November to May, owing to the heavy fall of snow on the Tragbal (Razdiangan) and the Burzil passes. However, the ordinary letter post is carried across the passes at favourable opportunities by local runners. Kashmir, Gilgit and Chitral are also connected by a telegraph line.

The present inhabitants of the country are all Mohammedans, chiefly of the Shia sect, with a few Sunnis and Maulais. The principal tribes are Hunza, Shina, Yeshkuns, Kashmiris, Kranians, Dums and Gujars. They are again divided into several families called after the names of distinguished ancestors. I am of the opinion that the Kranians are the original inhabitants of Gilgit, while the Yeshkuns, Shins and Hunza came afterwards in the above order and conquered the former inhabitants.

The Yeshkuns are probably an Aryan race, having arrived from Central Asia via the Hindu Kush. Being stronger than the aborigines, they succeeded in conquering these districts, made the original inhabitants their servants and named them "Kranians" (attendants).

The Shins profess to be the descendants of Arabs. They are probably Jews, and have come via Afghanistan from either Persia or Turkey. They prefer a style of self-government, and endeavour wherever they settle to continue this form of their original government. It is of interest to note, however, that before embracing Islam the Shins, in this resembling the Hindus, disliked meat, milk or even ghi made from cow's milk, disapproved of the keeping of fowls and regarded even a fish-line with aversion. If a Shin had taken two wives, one of his own tribe and the other of the Yeshkun tribe, the children

with the exception of Yarkhoon and the portion of the main valley already mentioned, belongs to Chitral. The Torikho Valley runs north-east and south-west parallel with the Yarkhoon Valley for over 60 miles to its junction with the Terich Valley. All the three valleys, Mastúj, Torikho, and Terich, are extremely fertile and populous; the cultivation is continuous, instead of being in patches, as in the case in all the valleys hitherto mentioned. The soil is mostly clay and gravel, the hill sides are bare with gentle slopes, and there are no pine forests, the only trees being cedars. The villages extend high up the mountain sides, independent of the main stream, and are supported by innumerable springs which gush out everywhere. Torikho is generally selected as the residence of the heir-apparent of the Chitral ruler. A route from the Barogil Pass to Chitral, after crossing the Shajanali spur, lies down the Torikho and Mastúj Valleys, and is the one generally used in summer, owing to the difficulty experienced, at that time of year, by horses in traversing that by the Yarkhoon Valley. In Kashkar Bala ingenious wicker-work foot-bridges are made of plaited osiers. They are called "shipul." Their vibration is very great, and they must be crossed cautiously by the most experienced. Owing to this, persons have to cross by them singly, and horses cannot use them.

Below the converging point of the valleys of Kashkar Bala, the main valley again contracts, and the Kashkar River flowing between precipitous rocks has a depth which varies in places 20 feet between its summer and winter levels. The land, where cultivable, is rich and fertile; the villages are large and populous, and the neat cultivation gives evidence of a considerable amount of prosperity. On the right bank the whole country belongs to Chitral; on the left the land, as within 20 miles of Chitral itself, belongs to Yassin. The rocks become more precipitous and the channel narrower and more tortuous, till bursting through a rock-bound gorge the Kashkar River receives the Ludkho or Istigan stream. The valley then suddenly widens, its whole character changes, and at 4 miles below the junction Chitral is reached. The hills, no longer rocky and bare, slope back gradually into grassy rounded tops with sides thickly clad with pine forest, and the distant peaks on either hand are hidden by the lower intervening hills. The climate, too, is changed, and instead of the arid, rainless character peculiar to the valleys hitherto described, it becomes like that of Cashmere, with heavy and frequent rainfalls. Further to the south the population increases in density.

From Sheh Do there is a great descent, of about 2000 feet, by a zigzag road, stony and rough. We do not immediately reach the Indus Valley, but we go first to where the end of the Sheh spur nearly meets the mountain on the opposite side of the Astor Nullah, leaving but a narrow channel for the water. Here the Astor River is spanned by two rope-bridges, made of birch twigs, and by a wooden bridge, over which ponies can be taken; a tower has been built that commands the passage; the position is held by some forty soldiers, who keep a good look-out. The place is a strong one; the soldiers live in caves in the rock; the rock overhangs, so as to keep off the sunshine for the greater part of the day; still the air becomes burning hot in summer; in winter, though no snow falls, the cold is somewhat severe.

Here crossing and following down the Astor River we soon debouch into the Indus Valley and find ourselves on the stony alluvial tracts, over nine miles of which, with small ups and downs, we have to go before reaching Dawar.

Dawar.

This is a spot where at one time was a good deal of cultivation, and it is likely that Brit-house once shaded it; but during the wars of two or three generations back it was laid waste and houses entirely depopulated, and sought but have ground remained. At that earlier time it was inhabited by Dards, but was ruled, as I am informed, from Skardú; it was by Sokándo Shah's invasion that it was laid waste.* At the present time Dawar has a very small area under cultivation, but the place is of some importance as a military post, since on the holding of it depends the passage of the Indus on the way to Gilgit. There is a fort which was built by the Dogras; it is manned by about seventy men, and as many more are in barracks outside. There is here also a prison, where a gang of incorrigible Kashmiri housebreakers are detained; these men enjoy during the day some liberty for cultivating their plots of land. The valley here is warm and dry; with irrigation two crops can always be

* See Chapter XIII.

from each wife, when as though reading my thoughts he said "and all from two wives who still remain active healthy women."

From this it can be seen that unless the country can be made to grow more food, with these strong men and fruitful women populating it, assisted by the practice of polygamy, those who are born there must go elsewhere to survive. It is estimated that about a thousand men go "abroad" each year to work, but this is not enough, and the result is that whereas the coolies of Ladakh have clothes to wear and flesh covering their bodies, the peasants of Baltistan who do not dwell in those parts which produce food, are poor, thin and ill-clad, their rags of clothes hardly covering their shivering bodies in the cold winds. A coolie's most precious possession, one for which he will almost die, is his coarse piece of blanket, which is much like sacking. And it seems that the wives of these men have never learned how to sew, for the stitches used to mend a tear are as large as the average child of five would make.

Nine many miles below Skardu the Indus again bursts through great mountain gorges, and if one were to follow it, eventually one would come to Gilgit which lies to the west of Baltistan and has the North West Frontier of Pakistan on its western border. The road is rough and bad, it is only suitable for coolies; in summer the heat is intense over this bare almost treeless track. At times the river has to be crossed, but it is too swift for a raft, being compressed between great cliffs of rock. Here one comes across the now only occasionally seen rope bridges; these are peculiar to this part of Kashmir, they consist of three thick ropes, each made up of twisted birch or willow twigs, which have been cast across the water from one precipice to the other. Two of these are used as handrails and below them is one for the feet, viewed from the end they form a V shape. Each of the hand rails is separately joined to the thick foot rope by cross pieces, forming a kind of "cat's cradle". The ends are secured to trees or failing that to great rocks. The rope bridge is made to hang in a graceful loop which allows it to swing in the wind, it is safer that way. Some of these bridges which are considered to be more permanent, have the lower rope doubled and tied

together, these two are crossed with twigs again, on these animals are made to cross, the small saw-footed mountain horse with head gingerly steps forward and slowly proceeds for there is no turning back. In one place at least there still remains a sort of pulley "bridge". This consists of a thick plaited leather rope—some six or eight strands strong. The traveller sits in a rope loop which is suspended from another ring which runs on this rope. He has a line attached to his precarious seat and with this is pulled across, rather after the fashion of a breeches buoy.

In places the road is made by driving stakes of wood into the rock face, others are rested across these and covered with chair. It is surprising how loose the track will get, how many stakes will have rotted, how close to the cliff face a man will have to get because of the weakened portion, before it is repaired. I have been told by more than one that it was not thought necessary to mend a rope bridge or a made-up, shelf-like track until someone had fallen through or over it. This was explained to me in all seriousness just as I was about to cross one after commenting on the frayed handrail.

The most generally known Gilgit Road is that which goes from Srinagar to Gilgit, a distance of about two hundred and seventy-five miles—fifteen marches. Until close on the end of the last century, the mere mention of the Gilgit Road to a Kashmiri villager terrified not only him but his whole family, for at Gilgit a garrison was maintained by the Kashmir State; this had to be kept supplied, and forced labour—known as "beggar"—was "mustered" for the work. The so-called road was then but a track which could not be used for pack ponies, with the result that coolies had to carry the loads, and the Kashmir State sepoys press-ganged these men from outside the city. On news reaching the villages that the soldiers were searching out coolies, the able-bodied men and usually the whole village made for the hills or forests leaving only the very old and the sick behind. There they would remain until all possibility of the men being taken had passed. If they were so unfortunate as to be caught unawares, only large bribes would buy the sepoys off, for the rest, the families wept and prayed. Even then the aged fathers would not give up hope and followed the troops to where they had collected, for many more men than were needed were brought

St Cuthb 7-8 (Jan-June) 1894 ASL Kashmir ASL
Dard A 9.3

making of a road, but despite all the difficulties it was completed. Much of the work and fighting undertaken in its making was described by Knight in his *Where Three Empires Meet*, a book which became a favourite point for schoolboys in the Victorian age for no less than three Victoria Crosses were won in the expedition which he describes so vividly.

"On the completion of the road the large, ill-disciplined, ill-equipped garrison that was maintained at enormous expense by the Kashmir State, was supplanted by a small but extremely efficient force under British officers," he says and goes on, "Since then the tribesmen have been reduced to subjection, the Pax Britannica has been extended to the furthermost confines of the Gilgit Agency, and the influence of Britain far beyond."

It had culminated with the subjection of the Hunza-Nagyar, tribes of raiders who had lived by preying on the caravans which passed from Kashgar and Yarkand, to be followed by a small expedition subduing the Chilas.

The country, like Ladakh and Baltistan, again covers about one hundred and fifty miles on each side of the great River Indus.

Even to this day, because of the heavy snowfalls and danger of avalanches, the road is closed to pack animals during the winter and spring months. Up to the Burzil or Kamri passes the country is well wooded and reasonably fertile with some glorious views from the tops of the passes, and on the way, especially at Gurais, some delightful camping grounds are to be found, among flowering meadows near firs and pines, with fishing and a fair chance of bagging a red bear. Until long after the British garrison was established there no European ladies were permitted to go beyond these two passes, not even when accompanied by their husbands. Over the 13,500 feet high Burzil pass and the road to Astor, the country is immediately arid and bare, with high, precipitous mountains, again a sportsman's country with magnificent markhor and fine ibex. Most of the marches are now over rough rock wastes which, during the summer months, radiate the terrible heat of the sun; there is no wonderful scenery to relieve the landscape; you find yourself thinking back to stories of the "beggar" coolies who would have trodden this road with heads down,

the Astor river to its junction with the Indus, and then runs north along the Indus to Bunji. It was once a flourishing tract, but has never recovered from the great flood of 1841, when the Indus was blocked by a landslip below the Hunza Pir, and the valley was turned into a lake. Opposite Bunji is the valley of Tai, and 6 miles further up the Gilgit river falls into the Indus. Gilgit is about 65 miles from the Indus, and has a considerable area of fertile irrigated land. The Wazirat now includes the tract known as Hunnuzah on the right bank of the Indus, and numerous valleys leading down to the Gilgit river. To the north the boundary reaches Gunch Pari on the Hunza road, and up the Kanjuti nullah as far as the Bhutili mountain to the south in the direction of Darel. From Gilgit itself mountain roads radiate into the surrounding valleys, and its geographical position now, as in ancient times, renders the fort on the right bank of the Gilgit river an important place. A suspension bridge connects Gilgit with the left bank, which is here as barren as the right bank is fertile. The ancient name of the site under its Hindu Rāja was Sargin. Later it was known as Gilit, which the Sikhs and Dogrās corrupted into Gilgit, but to the country people it is familiar still as Gilit or Sargin Gilit. It lies in the most mountainous region of the Himālayas. Within a radius of 65 miles there are eleven peaks ranging from 18,000 to 20,000 feet; seven from 20,000 to 22,000 feet; six from 22,000 to 24,000 feet; and eight from 24,000 to 26,600 feet. At their bases the mountains are barren and repellent, but at 7,000 feet there are fine forests of juniper and fir. Higher up grows the silver birch, and above all vegetable growth in sweep after sweep of glacier and eternal snow.

Botany. The pencil cedar is found from 14,400 feet down to 6,000 feet, and sometimes reaches a girth of 30 feet. *Pinus excelsa* grows between 9,500 and 12,000 feet. The edible pine is common in Astor, ranging from 7,000 to 10,000 feet. The useful birch-tree is common, and grows as high as 12,500 feet. The tamarisk does well in the barren valleys up to 6,000 feet. Roughly speaking, the upper limit of vegetation round Gilgit is 16,000 feet; above this the rocks are stained with lichens.

Fauna. Here are found the ibex and *markhor* (*Capra sibirica* and *C. falconeri*), and their deadly foe, the beautiful snow ounce (*Felis uncia*), and occasionally the wild dog (*Cyon dukhunensis*). The red bear (*Ursus arctos* or *isabellinus*), the snow cock (*Tetraogallus himalayensis*), and the grey partridge are common; and many of the migratory birds of India, wild geese,

Dard A 63

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487

counterpart of a road in the worst nightmare. The culminating point was that, for the whole way from top to bottom, there was not a drop of water to be found on it, not an atom of shade. With coolies in the hot weather the only way to tackle the ascent was by marching at night and sending on water half way for them: the descent we managed fairly comfortably by starting at from two to four in the morning. The road was so execrable that ponies which had made the trip once from Astor to Bunji were always considered unfit for further work without a fortnight's rest and good grazing. The Hatta Pir was a Golgotha: the whole six thousand feet was strewn with the carcasses of expended baggage animals, and in more than one place did we find a heap of human bones.

Rauphat was a place of the greatest importance, as the only line of communication between Gilgit, Astor, and Kashmir crossed the Astor river here. It is a weird spot: the river about a hundred to a hundred and fifty feet wide dashes through a gorge, making two turns at almost complete right angles, so that, standing on the bridge, you cannot see more than a couple of hundred yards in all. The force of the water is terrific, the noise deafening, and the heat in summer awful. The river was bridged by a rope bridge, and also by a wooden cantilever bridge of great length and doubtful strength, which rocked and swayed in a way to try bad nerves. This bridge had no hand-rail, was about five feet wide, and fifty feet above the water: it was not safe to ride over, though my engineer friend, Colonel Aylmer, V.C., when up with me, used habitually to ride over it and every other similar bridge in the country. But then his

341
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491

Bard Art

[facing p. 24]

4) Durant G-8 (1888-92) 1900 ATI Endorse
Bard Art 3

nerves were not those of the ordinary mortal. Once, when leading my horse over it, the bridge swayed so much that the sensible beast stuck out all four feet, and stood still till it stopped swinging.

On this occasion we elected to try the rope bridge for the first time. It was not nearly so alarming as it looked. The bridge is made of ropes of twisted birch twigs, each rope being about the thickness of a man's arm. Three of these make the footway, bound together here and there by withes; the hand-rails are similar ropes, the footway and hand-rails being fastened together by light one-inch ropes at every six feet or so. All three sets of ropes pass over one piece of timber set across uprights on each bank, and they are anchored as a rule to another beam of timber buried in loose stone masonry. Advantage is taken of a high rock or bit of cliff for a take-off; the nearer both ends of the bridge are to being at the same level the better, but this is not essential, and one end may be twenty feet higher than the other. Even with the take-off at each end on a level, the bridge sags very much in the centre; if there is much variation in the level the pitch at one end is necessarily much steeper than at the other, and at either end there is a very decided slope. This is trying for a tall man, for the nearer to the anchorages the shallower the V made by the ropes, and in order to get hold of the side-ropes you must stoop forward very much, which is apt to be unpleasant when you necessarily look down and see, sixty feet below you, hard rocks. Once you get above the water all feeling of discomfort passes off, and in the hot weather it is pleasant to stand leaning your back against the side-

Q Dharat G-3 (1888-89) 1888 Art Sadhuja
Dar-i Art

• 491 rope, swaying in the wind, and facing the cold air which rushes down above the centre of these ice-fed torrents. In order to prevent the side-ropes getting close together they are kept apart by sticks inserted at every few yards, over which you have to step. This is rather an acrobatic performance, as in the middle of the bridge the side ropes are two-and-a-half to three feet above the foot rope, but you soon get used to it. Every one crosses these bridges, old women, children, men carrying any loads, alive or dead. Some dogs negotiate them quite easily, but many get frightened and lie down half way and have to be picked up. We had one pariah, who followed us from Kashmir, drowned, alas! three years afterwards in the Indus, who always tried to walk over the rope bridge, and invariably fell into the water when half way over. He did not try the Shaitan Nara: nothing that fell into that boiling torrent could come out alive.

312 From Ramghat the road runs for eight miles over
133 an open sloping plain bordering the Indus to Bunji.
731 This plain extends north for another ten miles, and is reported to have been richly cultivated, to have been partially ruined during the numerous wars at the beginning of the century, and to have had its devastation completed by the great flood in 1841. This was caused by a gigantic landslip, probably following an earthquake. The whole hillside facing the Indus, just above the Lechar nullah, from a height of about four thousand feet above the river, was precipitated into the valley below, impinging on the opposite bank, and bringing down on that side a secondary hill-fall. The course of the river was completely

4a Dawood G-9 (1239-42) 1969 AVI Kashmir
Dard A/3

133 way every fan has been formed, the stream which
132 made it cutting its way through its own fan to reach the river.

The mud flow of which we saw the traces was a mere baby: it had only covered rocks ten feet high in the stream bed, and made a miniature fan where it debouched, but its force was attested by the huge boulders it had moved. These mud flows come down with terrible rapidity and irresistible force, and with no further warning than a trembling of the ground like an earthquake and a grinding roar, followed immediately by the wall of mud and rock: man or beast caught in a ravine by them is lost. The peculiar formation so common in the Hindu-Kush by which a stream, with a catchment area perhaps thirty to fifty miles round, cuts its way into the main river through a gorge fifty feet wide, with walls several hundred feet in height, is what makes these mud
• 491 flows possible and so dangerous. No one who had not had his attention drawn to them would believe in their action. When making the road down to Chilas in 1893 I found a bridge being built over a ravine apparently in a perfectly safe situation about thirty feet above the bed. The engineer in charge would not believe that it could be unsafe till I showed him on the cliffs not fifty yards from the bridge traces of a mud flow, which I knew was only a year or so old, some thirty feet higher than his bridge site.

725 About twelve miles from Gilgit we passed lines of sungahs, stone breast-works, following the edge of the cliff above the river, and blocking the ravine heads leading into it, and asked their meaning. The road at this point dropped into the river bed, and led for a

4a Dawad G-0 (1888-0) 1999 AVI Hadeeth
Dawd A<3

have recovered from the low, it would have been a terribly effective move wh which to open a campaign. Let people consider for a moment what a born leader like Skobelef would have made of a chance like this, and they will, I think, agree, that expensive as the Gilgit gun may have been, it was worth the candle.

BRAZEAU FALLS, UPPER NIGEL'S BRIDGE.
CONTRASTED WITH THE LOWER FALLS.

Do-4 A43
C4.1-21

They stick decoy ducks about the open water, and when the wild duck settle, drive them into the tunnel, catching sometimes two and three hundred at a time. The bridges speak for the lightness of foot of the people; they are merely, as a rule, light hurdles of willow; our heavy-footed English labouring folk would crush through them, but they seem strong enough for the people who use them. Horses of course ford.

We reached the top of the Dorah, fourteen thousand eight hundred feet in height, without difficulty, riding practically to the top of the pass. We had a lovely day, the air was perfect, and the view from the top is fine. Immediately below you the ground drops very suddenly to the Hauz-i-Dorah, Lake Dufferin as it was christened by Lockhart's party, but the lake itself is out of sight. We stayed a short time at the top, looking out over the Badakshan mountains towards that mysterious Central Asia which attracts by the glamour of its past history, by the veil which shrouds its future. Balkh, Bokhara, Samarkhand, what visions come trooping as their names arise! The armies of Alexander, the hordes of Gengis Khan and Timur go glittering by; dynasties and civilisations rise and fall like the waves of the sea; peace and prosperity again and again go down under the iron hoof of the conqueror; for centuries past death and decay have ruled in the silent heart of Asia. Are we now looking on the re-awakening? Shall the land again blossom like the rose, and proud cities rise on the ruins of the old under semi-European sway, and greater emperors than the Great Khan rule through centuries of generally last-

G. Dwarka G-6 (1889-92) 1892 Afg. Kashmir
Pam'd A43

CHAPTER XI

THE INDUS VALLEY RISING

There were many changes since I had first come up to Gilgit. A ten-foot mule road now ran through all the way from Kashmir, only a few bad cliffs were still being worked on, good bridges existed over the Kishengunga and Astor rivers, and the Indus bridge, a wire-rope suspension bridge, was being rapidly constructed. Aylmer, who to my great regret had been transferred elsewhere, had before leaving built a temporary four-foot wide suspension bridge of telegraph wire over the Indus, just below the site of the permanent structure, which was of the greatest assistance, and for the first time in the history of the mighty river its upper reaches had been spanned by a bridge over which men, if they dared, could ride, and across which laden baggage animals could pass. I found the whole road covered with long trains of properly organised transport, and, *mirabile dictu*, on arrival in Gilgit, eighteen months' supply for the troops in hand. The change was startling and welcome.

There was much to discuss with Robertson after I had again taken over command.[1] The Government of India were considering the advisability of de-

[1] Blue Book. Correspondence relating to Chitral, 1895.